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Naaman in his chariot before the house of Elisha.—Page 87.

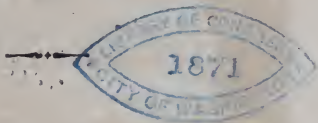
Hooker, Mrs. Mary Ann (Brown)
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THE

LIFE OF ELISHA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF ELIJAH."

WRITTEN FOR THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION, AND
REVISED BY THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.



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PREFACE.

THE writer of this little Bible story, and several of a similar character published by the American Sunday-school Union, has been led to think that children might receive more instruction from Scripture biographies, if they could see the characters described in the midst of the scenes in which they were accustomed to appear when alive. The eminent men of the Bible lived so long ago,—much that is related of them seems so strange and unusual, when unexplained by a reference to the manners and customs of their age, that children are in danger of regarding them as imaginary persons—inhabitants

of another world. The object of the writer has been to represent them as living, breathing men ; moving about, and acting like other men, according to the circumstances of their country and age. An attempt has been made to describe the scenes in which they took an active part ; the people among whom they lived ; and to present them in that dress which they were accustomed to wear when alive. This was a difficult task, and has been but imperfectly performed ; but no pains have been spared to obtain accurate information respecting the manners, customs, and scenery of Palestine, and the surrounding countries.

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THE
LIFE OF ELISHA.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY HISTORY OF ELISHA.

Birth-place of Elisha—His parentage—Elijah chooses him for a companion—How they spent their time—Two things in which Elisha should be imitated—Elisha divides the waters of the Jordan.

THE city of Abel-meholah was situated near the foot of the mountains of Gilboa, in the fruitful



country of Manasseh. It was a few miles west of the river Jordan, and was north-east of Shechem, and south-east of Samaria, which were the two principal cities in the land of Israel.

This was the city unto which a great army of the Midianites fled, when Gideon, with his three hundred men, armed only with trumpets, and lamps hidden in pitchers, drove them from the valley, by the hill of Moreh.

More than three thousand years after the creation of the world, and nine hundred and six years before the birth of Jesus Christ, there lived a man in Abel-meholah, whose name was Elisha. He was the son of Shaphat,

who, it is supposed, was a rich man. But, though Shaphat was rich, he had not, like many inconsiderate fathers, suffered his son to grow up in idleness. Elisha used to cultivate his father's fields, in the neighbourhood of Abel-meholah.

In that country, men were called rich who had a great deal of land, and many cattle and sheep, even though they had not much money. The Israelites were not in general a trading people. They lived chiefly by cultivating the ground, as farmers do in the present day. Farming was then, and is now, justly esteemed an honourable employment.

One day, as Elisha was ploughing in the fields, with twelve yoke of

oxen, the prophet Elijah passed by. He came up close to Elisha, and threw his mantle upon him. In the east, people sometimes show their meaning by expressive actions, instead of explaining it by words. So Elisha understood, when the mantle was thrown over him, that Elijah wished to have him for a companion, and a successor in teaching the people. Elisha did not hesitate, or beg to be excused. Though his parents were dear to him, and the fields of Abel-meholah pleasant, he was willing to leave all, when God sent Elijah to command him to do so. He instantly left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said to him, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my

mother, and then I will follow thee." When Elijah had consented, Elisha returned, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh, and made a feast for his parents and friends: then he arose, and went after Elijah, and attended upon him.

Elijah and Elisha spent their time in privately instructing the Israelites, and in visiting and superintending the schools of the prophets, or the places where young men were preparing to become the spiritual teachers of the people.

There are two things in which Elisha ought to be imitated by all children and young persons.

One is his readiness to obey the

commands of God, though they were difficult to obey. He was willing immediately to leave his father and mother, and the comfort and abundance in which he had been accustomed to live, and the pleasant fields and vineyards which he had cultivated. He consented to go with Elijah, who was a poor man; to be dependent upon charity for his support; to live upon the coarsest food; and perhaps to lodge frequently in the open air, upon the ground. It was hard to do this; but Elisha did it cheerfully. This shows that he loved God better than his friends, or any of his comforts.

There is another thing in which Elisha set a good example to young

persons. It is in the affection and respect which he showed towards his parents.

Now, I am sorry to believe that any child can be so unfeeling and wicked, as to treat his parents with disrespect. But I am afraid there are many such. I have known some children who did not confide in their parents, or consult them about any of their plans or pursuits. They disregarded their advice, and disobeyed their commands. Nay, I have even heard of some who had so little sense of what is right and becoming, as to use unkind and insolent language to a father or a mother.

How different were the feelings and conduct of Elisha! He remem-

bered the command of God, "Honour thy father and thy mother." He remembered how his parents had loved and watched over him in infancy and childhood; and how carefully they had instructed him, and supplied all his wants. He knew that it would grieve his father and mother to part with him, and he would not, though he had grown to be a man, leave them, even to become a prophet of God, till he had bade them an affectionate farewell.

Elisha continued to attend upon Elijah for ten years. During that time, Ahab was killed in a battle with the Syrians; and Ahaziah his son, who reigned after him, died, in consequence of a fall from the roof

of the palace. Jehoram, another son of Ahab, was the next king.

Elijah, one of the best and greatest of the prophets, was now to be taken up to heaven. Elisha went with him over the Jordan, saw him ascend in a fiery chariot, and caught his mantle as it fell. Returning, he smote the waters of the Jordan with the mantle of Elijah, and divided them hither and thither, so that he went over on dry land.* On his way to Jericho, he met fifty of the sons of the prophets, who belonged to the school in that city. They had probably seen him divide the waters of

* For a particular narrative of these events, see *Life of Elijah*, published by the American Sunday-school Union, chap. xi.

the river, and understood that they must now render to him the respect and obedience which they had before given to Elijah. So they bowed themselves to the ground before him. They then asked permission to go and look for Elijah ; supposing that the Spirit of God might, perhaps, have cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. Elisha suffered them to go, because they insisted upon it, though he knew that it would be of no use. They sought three days for Elijah, but could not find him. Then they returned to Jericho.

CHAPTER II.

DESCRIPTION OF JERICHO.

Jericho—Description of the plain of Jericho—Unwholesome and bitter spring of water—Elisha casts salt into it, and makes the water sweet—Present appearance of this spring—Elisha goes to Bethel—Children mock the prophet—They are torn in pieces by bears—Children should respect good men.

THE city of Jericho, where Elisha spent a few days after the ascension of Elijah, was twenty miles north-east of



Jerusalem, and six miles west of

the river Jordan. It was situated in the delightful plain of Jericho, which extended about ten miles along the Jordan, and the northern part of the Dead Sea. This plain was overhung, on all sides, by barren, rugged mountains. The mountains of Judea stretched out to the west and south-west, and far in the east rose the tops of Pisgah and Nebo. The mountains of Quarantania, in the west, were without verdure, and covered with sand, or chalky earth. In some places were steep cliffs, which it was impossible to climb; in others, the rocks were thrown about in such wild confusion, that it seemed as though an earthquake had torn and scattered them.

The plain of Jericho lay in smiling beauty at the foot of these desolated mountains. The bright waters of the Jordan rolled in graceful windings through green and flowery meadows. Its banks were fringed with tamarisks, and oleanders, and willows. Many cattle were feeding in the pastures, who, when the sun rose high in the heavens, would seek a shelter from the scorching rays, under the sycamore trees; or, perhaps, beneath some aged terebinth, whose large trunk, and wide spreading branches, and thick evergreen foliage, made it appear like the monarch of the forest. The towers of the city rose amid gardens of figs, pomegranates, citrons, and olives.

So many palm trees grew in and around it, that it was called the city of palms. The inhabitants cultivated, with great care, a shrub resembling a fir, from which flowed the precious balsam of Gilead. This balsam was so much valued as a medicine, that it was sold for double its weight in silver.

The sheltered valley of Jericho was warmer than any part of Palestine. The almond tree, one of the earliest blooming plants of spring, was covered with white blossoms several days sooner here than on the hills of Judea. Soon the plum-tree yielded its fruit, and the flowers of many bulbous plants appeared in the gardens and meadows. Swarms of

wild bees were attracted by their fragrance. They formed the honeycomb in the hollows of the trees, or in the crevices of rocks. The honey often flowed down the trunks of trees, to the ground ; showing to persons who were passing by, where they might find a supply for themselves and their families.

The corn sprang up rapidly ; the ears ripened in the sun, and the earliest harvests in the land were reaped in the plain of Jericho. The vines were so luxuriant that they climbed to the tops of large trees, and, following and twisting around the branches, decked them with purple clusters. Later in the season, the heat was so great that it could

scarcely be borne. The inhabitants of the city then retired to their coolest apartments, or reposed by the fountains in their courts. Here the scorching rays of the sun were shut out, by an awning stretched across the court, from roof to roof. But when the day was past, and the refreshing winds of evening blew, they hastened to the tops of their houses, which they often made their lodging places for the night.

Notwithstanding the pleasant situation of Jericho, the only spring of water in the neighbourhood was unwholesome and bitter. Wherever it flowed, it made the land unfruitful, and caused the death of those who drank it. This was a great

calamity to the inhabitants. Bad water is much more common in the east than in America. In this country, there are few places where good water cannot be obtained in great abundance; and, in many places, there are sparkling fountains gushing out among the hills; so that we are in danger of forgetting their value. A journey through the deserts of Africa, or Arabia, where travellers often perish from thirst, and where a rich man would sometimes give all his wealth for a cup of cold water, would teach us to be more grateful. And if we had been in Jericho, where the people, when overcome by the excessive heat, could not obtain a drop of sweet

water to quench their thirst, I think we should have been willing to exchange all the beautiful flowers and fine fruits of the city of palms, for the deep, cool, refreshing wells of our own country.

The men of Jericho were convinced, by what they had seen, that God had given to Elisha the same power of working miracles that Elijah had while he was upon the earth. So some of them came to Elisha, and said, "Behold, I pray thee, the situation of the city is pleasant, as my lord seeth ; but the water is naught."

Elisha told them to bring him some salt in a new cruse or dish. They brought it, and he went out

to the fountain of Jericho, which rises at the base of a low hill, or mound, west of the city, and near the foot of the mountains of Quarantania.

Elisha stood by the spring, and cast the salt into it, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death;" meaning, probably, they shall not any more cause death. Immediately the waters became sweet and wholesome, and they have remained so to this day.

Now, I cannot tell exactly how this fountain appeared, almost three thousand years ago, when Elisha cast salt into it. But persons who

have lately been there, say that it is enclosed in a basin thirty feet long, and from fifteen to eighteen feet broad. This basin is lined, and partly paved with hewn stone. On one side of it is an opening, through which the water pours out in a stream large enough to turn a mill. The waters of the fountain are cool, sweet, and transparent, and full of small fish. Large trees grow on its borders, intermingled with bushes bearing a kind of apple, about the size of a common plum, and of a yellowish colour. This fruit, though beautiful to the eye, is unpleasant to the taste, and said to be poisonous.

The fountain is spread out like a beautiful mirror, under the shade,

reflecting the trees on its banks, the bushes with their golden fruit, and the soft rich sky. It is so quiet and still, that these shadows scarcely seem to tremble, except when a breeze stirs the thick boughs. But sometimes the smooth waters are disturbed by the pelican diving for fish, the stork wading in the shallow places in search of food, or some wandering Arab dipping his pitcher into the spring. The stream which issued out from the opening in the enclosure divided into several rivulets, that watered the gardens and plain of Jericho. How happy were the inhabitants when they tasted the water, and found that it was no longer bitter, nor unwholesome. The

fountain has since been called the fountain of Elisha.

Though this was a time of great wickedness and idolatry in Israel, I trust there were many good men in Jericho, who gave thanks to the true God for the great kindness he had shown them.

Elisha left Jericho, and went up to Bethel. When he came near to the city, the road led by the side of a wood. Perhaps he was then on the mountain which is east of Bethel. As he was passing quietly along, a great many children came out of the city, and began to mock him, saying, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head." Elisha turned

back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. I suppose Elisha was not angry at their treatment of him, but that God commanded him to do so, to teach other children not to be so wicked. These children meant to insult the prophet. They lived in Bethel, where the golden calf was worshipped. They had been trained up in idolatry, and probably hated Elisha because he was a prophet of God. Perhaps they had heard that Elijah had gone up into heaven, and they scornfully advised Elisha to follow him. It is very wrong to ridicule others on account of any thing in their appearance that we do not like. It is much worse to ridi-

cule them on account of their piety. When children do this, it shows that they are hardened in sin, and that they have been very badly brought up. God determined to punish these wicked children and their parents. He sent two bears out of the woods, and they tore in pieces forty-two of the children. This shows that he is very angry with those who despise and mock his faithful servants.

Children should learn, from this story, to fear God and to respect good men. When they are tempted to despise aged, or poor, or pious persons, let them remember the dreadful end of the forty-two children in the wood of Bethel.

CHAPTER III.

ELISHA GOES WITH THE ARMY AGAINST
MOAB.

Jehoram reigns over Israel—The Moabites revolt—Jehoram and Jehoshaphat march against them—They are in great want of water—They consult Elisha—He foretells a supply of water—Water comes from the wilderness—The Moabites overcome, and their country conquered—The king of Moab sacrifices his son.

JEHORAM, the king of Israel, was a wicked man. He was not quite so bad as his father and mother; for he put away, for a time, the image of Baal. But he did not love God, or worship him aright. He suffered the people to sacrifice to the golden calves which Jeroboam had set up. Sometimes, when a king or a general

conquers a country, he will not consent to withdraw his armies, or make peace, till the king or governors of the country he has conquered, promise to pay him a certain sum of money every year. This is called paying tribute. For one country to pay tribute to another is an acknowledgment of inferiority. King David conquered the Moabites, and the king of Moab had ever since paid tribute to the king of Israel, to the amount of one hundred thousand lambs and one hundred thousand rams, with the wool. After the death of Ahab, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel, and refused to pay this tribute.

Jehoram gathered together his

armies to go and fight against the king of Moab. He sent and requested Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to help him. Jehoshaphat consented; probably because his son had married the sister of Jehoram.

The
kings of
Israel
and
Judah,
with
their
armies,
went



round the southern part of the Dead sea, where they were joined by the king of Edom, who was tributary to the king of Judah. They then

went northward, through the desert of Edom, towards Moab. This was a journey of seven days, through a terrible wilderness, and there was no water for the men or cattle. And the king of Israel said, "Alas! that the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of the king of Moab!" Jehoram had neglected to ask direction of God, before he went on this dangerous journey, though he might easily have done it. Yet he now complained that God had brought him into difficulty.

Jehoshaphat, who was a pious king, knew what it was right to do. He said, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may in-

quire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants informed him that Elisha, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah, had come along with the army. And Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the Lord is with him." So the king of Israel, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom, went to that part of the camp where Elisha was.

Elisha was indignant when he saw the wicked king Jehoram, who, he knew, would not have sought help from God, if he had not been in great distress. "And he said to the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father and the prophets of thy mother. And the king of

Israel said unto him, Nay, for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee, nor see thee."

Elisha was much disturbed by seeing Jehoram, and by recollecting all the evil that had been done by the family of Ahab. He sent for a minstrel to play before him, that his mind might be composed by sweet strains of music, and prepared to receive a message from God to the three kings.

While the minstrel played, the

Spirit of God came over Elisha, and taught him what he should say. "And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones."

I suppose, after Elisha had said this, the soldiers of the army were

employed in digging ditches, as God had commanded. And the next morning at sunrise, just at the hour when the morning sacrifice was offered at the temple, at Jerusalem, there came water from the south; so that the trenches and all the deep places in the valley were filled with water, and the people drank as much as they wished. In the mean time, the Moabites had heard that three armies had come against them; and they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and encamped on the border of their country. They rose up early in the morning, to prepare for battle, and when they saw the water in the valley, which was commonly dry, the sun was shining across it in such

a manner, that it looked like blood. Perhaps the soil was of a reddish colour, which helped to deceive the Moabites. They said to each other, "This is blood; the three armies have surely quarrelled and slain each other; now, let us go and take the goods from their camp."

They rushed hastily forward to rob the camp of their enemies; and the Israelites and their allies waited till they came near. Then they attacked the Moabites, who were in such confusion that they could not defend themselves. Many of them were killed, and the rest fled to their own country. They shut themselves up within the brick walls of Kirhareth on the south of the river Arnon.

This was their capital city, and is now called Kerek.

This city is on high ground, and is seen from Jerusalem. The allied armies passed over the rich and delightful country of Moab, destroying the cities, filling up the wells, cutting down the trees, and scattering stones over the fields. At last the king of Moab, having in vain attempted to break through the camp of the Edomites, grew desperate. He brought out his eldest son, who was heir to his crown, and, in sight of the people, offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall of Kirhareth. This dreadful act filled every body with horror, and the Israelites and their allies retired to their

homes. It was a custom among heathen nations, to offer human sacrifices to their gods, in times of great trouble. Some even offered their own children. This sacrifice was probably offered to Chemosh, which was the national idol of the Moabites.

CHAPTER IV.

ELISHA RESTORES THE SHUNAMITE'S SON
TO LIFE.

The widow and her two sons—She asks aid of Elisha—Miracle of the oil—Elisha lives on Mount Carmel—Woman of Shunem—She makes a chamber for Elisha—Description of it—Elisha's promise to the Shunamite—Her son is sick, and dies—She goes to Elisha at Mount Carmel—Mode of travelling in the east—She meets Elisha—Eastern manner of salutation—Elisha returns with her—He restores her son to life.

ONE of the prophets died, and left his wife a widow, and his two sons fatherless. He was poor; for it was not the business of the prophets to lay up riches for themselves. Beside this, he owed a man a sum of money. The widow could not pay the debt.

The creditor was very cruel, and threatened to seize upon her sons and sell them for slaves. She was much distressed. As Elisha was the friend and guardian of all the prophets, she went and made her complaint to him. And Elisha said unto her, "What shall I do for thee?" And she said, "Thy handmaid hath not any thing in the house save a pot of oil." This was olive oil. Then he said, "Go borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full."

So she left him, and borrowed many vessels of her neighbours; then she went with her sons into the house, and shut the door. Her sons brought



her the jars, and she began to pour out. As she poured out, God made the oil to increase, so that she filled all the vessels. The woman would not use the oil till she had asked direction of Elisha. He told her to sell the oil, and pay the debt with

part of the money that she would obtain for it. The remaining part she might use for the support of herself and her children. It was right that she should be honest, and pay all that she owed, before she thought of her own wants.

The widow's heart must have been full of joy and gratitude to God, who had wrought this miracle for her relief. There was now no more fear that her sons would be sold for slaves. They would remain with her, to comfort her in her sorrow for the loss of her husband. She would not be left to loneliness and grief, and they would not be made to feel the evils of bondage.



About this time Elisha lived at Mount Carmel; but he used often to visit the schools of the prophets, to

assist in instructing the young men, and in the management of their affairs. When upon these journeys, he sometimes passed through the city of Shunem, which was in the tribe of Issachar, north of Samaria. There was a woman of wealth and consequence residing in this city, who was very pious. She loved Elisha because he was a prophet of

God; and when he came that way, she urged him to stop and eat bread. After this, whenever he passed through Shunem, he went to her house to refresh himself. At last, she said to her husband, "Behold, now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither."

He consented; and the chamber was accordingly built and furnished. It was probably a room jutting out from the upper story

into the court, over the porch, or entrance to the court. These rooms are common in eastern countries. They are called oleahs; and there is



usually a private staircase leading to them from the porch. If the Shunemite's chamber was built in this way, Elisha could go to it and leave it without entering the house, or disturbing the family, which would be very convenient. Now, as Elisha

was the most important man among the ministers or prophets of Israel, it may be worth our while to stop a moment, and notice the furniture of his chamber. His kind hostess was able to furnish it as she thought proper; and she undoubtedly obtained such things as she supposed the prophet would like. And what were they? A bed, or divan, which you know is a sort of low, broad sofa; a table; a stool, and a candlestick: just what was necessary, and nothing more. I think we should learn from this to be satisfied with plain furniture and simple accommodations.

The next time Elisha came to Shunem, he was shown into his

chamber, and he slept there. He was grateful to the woman for her kindness, and wished to reward her. And he said to Gehazi, his servant, "Call this Shunemite." And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto him, "Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" And she answered, "I dwell among mine own people." By this expression, she probably meant that she dwelt safely and happily among her own friends and relatives, and needed nothing from the king or his officers. She then withdrew.

Elisha asked Gehazi what could be done for her. Gehazi informed him that she had no child. Then Elisha told him to call her again. And when he called her, she stood in the door. Elisha said to her, that, about that time the next year, God would give her a son. This promise was fulfilled at the time mentioned by the prophet.

When the child was about five years old, he went out one morning to his father, who was in the field with the reapers. While he amused himself by seeing the men cut down and bind up the grain, and perhaps by listening to their pleasant songs, as they laboured, he began to feel unwell. He said to his father, "My

head, my head!" and his father said to a lad who stood by, "Carry him to his mother." It is supposed that he was seized with an inflammation of the brain, owing to the extreme heat of the sun. This disease is common in warm countries, and is called *coup de soleil*, or stroke of the sun. The lad brought the child to his mother. She took him in her arms, and held him till noon, when he died. She carried the lifeless body of her little boy up to the chamber of the prophet, and laid it on his bed. She then called to her husband, and said, "Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again." And

he said, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? it is neither new moon nor sabbath." I suppose it was customary for serious people to visit Elisha and the other prophets, on sabbath days, and at the festival of the new moon, to receive instruction. She answered, "It shall be well to go." As soon as an ass could be saddled, she set out; telling the servant who attended her to go forward as fast as possible. The asses of western Europe, and those which are used in this country, are heavy, dull animals; but in the countries east of the Mediterranean, they are lively and handsome, like a small horse, and are frequently rode upon by people of rank, especially by ladies.

The woman of Shunem rode about thirty miles to Mount Carmel.

Elisha saw her at a distance, and said to his servant Gehazi, "Behold, yonder is that Shunemite. Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? And she answered, "It is well." Though she was greatly afflicted at the death of her only child, she said, "IT IS WELL;" for she knew that her heavenly Father had done what was right.

When she came to the man of God, she knelt or prostrated herself before him, and caught him by the feet. Gehazi came near to thrust

her away. And Elisha said, "Let her alone, for her soul is filled with bitter sorrow, and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." As soon as she could speak, she said, "Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me?"

I suppose the meaning of this was, that as she had not impatiently desired this child, but Elisha had promised it to her as a great blessing, she could not believe that God had given it to her in mockery, to remove it so soon, and thus to make her far more unhappy than she was before. She wished, therefore, that Elisha would pray that she might be in some way relieved from her distress.

Then he said to Gehazi, "Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thy hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child."

The long flowing outer garment which the Israelites wore was inconvenient for walking, when it hung loosely from the shoulders. They used, when preparing for a journey, or a long walk, to fasten it around them with a girdle. In that country, the men often took their journeys on foot. It was customary, therefore, for every man to carry a staff to lean upon when he was weary.

Elisha's command to Gehazi, to

salute no man, and not even to answer any salutation, appears very strange to us; but that is because our customs are so different from those of people in the east. Now, I will illustrate, or show by an example, what I mean. Suppose a friend was very ill, and you were going, in great haste, to a neighbouring town, to call a physician. And suppose, that whenever you met an acquaintance, it was necessary for you to stop, and, after saying very formally, "Peace be with you," bowing, at the same time, with your hand upon the left breast, to clasp his hand, raise it towards your lips, then withdraw your hand, kiss it, and lay it upon your

forehead; then to touch his cheek with yours; then inquire about his health, give thanks that you are permitted once more to see him, and pray that he may enjoy every kind of prosperity. Suppose that politeness required you to repeat these ceremonies, again and again, in a very animated and earnest and solemn manner. If you met a superior, suppose it was necessary to prostrate yourself, kiss the hem of his garment, and lay it on your forehead;—I think you would despair of reaching the end of your journey in season. Yet these are the modes of salutation in the east. This is the reason why the Hebrews, when they were sent upon errands

that required speed, were told to salute no man by the way. When a person refused to salute another, it was understood that he was in haste, and he was not considered impolite.

I suppose that Elisha hoped God would hear his prayers, and restore the child to life, when Gehazi laid the staff upon his face. But the mother of the child was not satisfied. She would not leave the prophet, but urged him to go with her. She knew that if any human being could help her, it must be Elisha. He could not deny her request; and arose, and accompanied her to Shunem.

On their way they met Gehazi, who told Elisha that he had obeyed his command, and laid the

staff upon the child's face, but that he did not awake, or show any signs of life.

Elisha arrived at the house where he had so often been hospitably entertained. He went into his chamber; and there the child lay, stiff and cold, upon his bed. This was a sorrowful sight to the prophet. Elisha had undoubtedly often seen the happy countenance of this little boy, and heard his cheerful voice, while he was playing in the court or garden of his father's house. Now, that house was made desolate by his death; his mother's heart was full of grief, and many of his father's hopes were destroyed.

Elisha shut the door, and in that

lonely chamber, by the side of the lifeless body of the little boy, he prayed earnestly unto God. He did not expect to raise the child to life himself, but he hoped that God would do it, in answer to his prayers. And he lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and soon the flesh of the child became warm. Then he went to some other part of the house; perhaps on the roof, or in the cloisters around the court; and walked to and fro, probably praying all the time. After a little while, he went up again, and

stretched himself upon the child. The warmth of his little body increased ; the blood began to flow ; the breath returned ; he sneezed, and opened his eyes. Thus God caused the child to be restored to life. And Elisha told Gehazi to call the mother of the little boy. She came in, and saw her



child alive! Elisha said, "Take up thy son." She fell at his feet in wonder and thankfulness, and then took up her son and carried him out.



CHAPTER V.

ELISHA MAKES THE POISONOUS FOOD
WHOLESOME.

Elisha goes to Gilgal—School of the prophets at Gilgal—Want of food at the school—Poisonous wild gourds—Elisha makes the poisonous food wholesome—How the students obtained their support—First-fruits—Miracle of the loaves.



AFTER this, Elisha went to Gilgal to visit the school of the prophets. Gilgal was the place to which the Israelites first

came, when they crossed over the

Jordan, and entered the land of Canaan. Here was the monument of twelve stones which Joshua took from the midst of the Jordan, and caused to be set up, as a memorial that the waters of the river had been divided, and that the Israelites passed over on dry land. It was a place where sacrifices were frequently offered, and other religious services performed; and where prophets and good men had dwelt in former days. It was one of the places where courts were held, when Samuel was judge of Israel. It was a city in which it was considered proper to attend to the business of the nation; and, when Saul was chosen king, sacrifices were offered at Gilgal, and

he was crowned there. The elders of Judah came thither to meet king David, and conduct him to Jerusalem, when he returned, after having been driven out by Absalom.

While Elisha was staying at the school of the prophets, they found it difficult to obtain food for the students, because there was a famine in the land. In seasons when the early and latter rains were not sent in abundance, the wheat and barley did not grow, and the fruits did not ripen. And, sometimes, when there was rain enough, a multitude of locusts and other insects would come, and eat up the tender plants, and destroy every green thing. I do not

know what caused the famine, at this time; but it was probably just before the barley-harvest, and the grain of former years was exhausted.

Elisha told his servant to set on the great pot, and prepare some pottage for the sons of the prophets. This seems to have been a kind of vegetable soup. One of the young men went out into the field to gather herbs to put into it. He found a wild vine loaded with gourds, which looked as if they might be very good. He plucked as many of them from the vine as he could carry in the folds of his mantle, and went and emptied them into the pot. These gourds were not proper to be eaten, though the young man did not know

it. They are supposed to have been the colocynth, which grows on a vine somewhat resembling that of a cucumber. The gourds, when ripe, are of the size, and colour, and shape of an orange; but they are extremely bitter, and quite poisonous.

When the pottage was sufficiently boiled, the servant poured it out into a dish, and the young men sat down to eat. As they were eating, they discovered, by the disagreeable taste of the food, that some hurtful plants must be mingled with it. They cried out to Elisha, "Oh, thou man of God, there is death (or poison, that will cause death) in the pot." And they could not eat it. But Elisha said, "Then bring meal."

And he cast it into the pot; and he said, "Pour out for the people, that they may eat." This was immediately done. They began to eat, and found the food healthful and pleasant, because God had enabled Elisha to take away from it whatever was poisonous. The young prophets seem to have been very well satisfied with a dinner of wild herbs, boiled in water, after the poisonous qualities were removed. I think they could not have been so luxurious as many young persons are in our days.

While these young men were engaged in study, they could not always support themselves, though they probably devoted many hours

to labour. Pious people, in different parts of the land, used sometimes to send them such articles as they needed. While the priests and Levites lived in the cities of Israel, the people used to give them the first-fruits that were gathered, and some of the first barley and wheat that was reaped. This was done because God had not given the priests and Levites any land, when the country was divided among the tribes, but had commanded their brethren to support them. Now that the priests and Levites had gone to the land of Judah, to worship at the temple, those Israelites that wished to do right, gave their first-fruits to the prophets, who were generally poor,

and who had taken the places of the priests, as teachers of the people. A man came from Baal-shalisha, which is in the south part of the plain of Sharon. He brought Elisha twenty loaves of bread, made of the first-fruits of his barley, and a quantity of corn, or barley, in the ear, to be parched or roasted. The Israelites were fond of eating it in that way.

This is the reason why I think that the famine was in March, just before harvest. The man from Baal-shalisha brought some of the first of his barley to Elisha the prophet; and barley was the earliest grain that was reaped in Palestine. Elisha told his servant to place the

bread and ears of corn on the table, for the young men and all the other people who were then at the school. His servant was surprised, and said, "What! should I set this before an hundred men?" The loaves of bread which were made in that country were small; more like cakes, or rolls, than like our loaves. The servant was sure that there was not enough. But Elisha said again, "Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat and shall leave thereof." He set it before the people: they ate, and were satisfied, and there was some left.

CHAPTER VI.

ELISHA HEALS NAAMAN THE SYRIAN.

Syria—Naaman, the Syrian captain—He has the leprosy—Description of the leprosy—Lepers banished from cities—The captive maid—She advises Naaman to go to Elisha—Naaman goes to Samaria—He arrives at the house of Elisha—How Elisha treats him—Naaman is angry—He washes in Jordan, and is healed—Several things in which he acted wisely—He is grateful for being cured—He offers a present to Elisha—The prophet refuses it—Naaman's request—Wicked conduct and punishment of Gehazi.

SYRIA was a country which lay north - east of Palestine, and east of Mount Lebanon. Benha-



dad, king of Syria, reigned in Damascus, the capital of his kingdom. This is now one of the oldest cities in the world. It is the place from which formerly came the Damascene plum, Damask roses, and Damask silks.

The commander-in-chief over the armies of Syria was called Naaman. He was much esteemed and honoured by his king, because he was a brave man and a skilful general, and because he had been helped by God to gain great victories. But he was afflicted by a distressing disease called leprosy.

The leprosy is not known among us, but it is common in Africa, and Asia, and other warm countries.

People who have this disorder live many years, but it makes them very uncomfortable and very disagreeable to others. It shows itself upon the skin, by small swellings or scales that are usually white, but sometimes of a dark colour. These scaly spots increase slowly, till at last the body is covered by them, and the whole skin is destroyed. The sense of touch is lost, and ulcers appear in different parts of the head and face. The voice becomes hoarse; the eyes are red and inflamed; they project out from the head, and do not move easily. The hair turns grey, and comes out, the joints separate, the nails fall from the fingers, and sometimes the fingers themselves decay

and drop off. Yet the leper eats and drinks as much as others. Though his pain is not severe, his mind is filled with sad and desponding thoughts, and he becomes weary of life. This is an hereditary disease ; which means, that when a man has it, his children will generally have it, and perhaps his grand-children also.

The leprosy is infectious, like the small-pox ; and, in order to keep it from spreading, the law of Moses commanded that all lepers among the Israelites should be banished from the cities, and live in solitary places, by themselves. When strangers approached their melancholy dwellings, the lepers were

obliged to give them warning of their danger, by crying out, "Unclean, unclean." There was no such law in Syria, and Naaman continued to be the chief officer and favourite of the king, though he was afflicted with leprosy. But he suffered much from the disease, and it must have been unpleasant for others to come near him.

Notwithstanding all his honours, Naaman must have been very unhappy, for he knew that no medicine could cure him, and that he should grow worse and worse.

During one of the wars between the Syrians and the Israelites, some companies of Syrian soldiers went

into the land of Israel, to disturb the inhabitants and rob them of their property. They probably killed some persons, and took as much of the corn, and wine, and fruit, as they could carry away; and perhaps they drove before them, to their own country, some of the cattle of the Israelites. And what was worse, they seized upon a little Hebrew girl, whom they found without a protector, and carried her away from her parents and friends, to a strange country. Such things were done very frequently at that time; and they are now done by savage nations, and by those who are only partly civilized; but it is very wrong to do so. This little girl was given

to Naaman, the general, and she waited on his wife. Naaman seems to have treated her kindly, which was his duty; and she understood at least one of the duties of a servant, for she took an affectionate interest in her master and his family. She had heard, in her own country, of Elisha; perhaps she had seen him. She told her mistress that she earnestly wished her master would go to the prophet who was in Samaria, for she was quite sure he would heal his leprosy. Some person told Naaman what the little maid had said, and he probably informed Benhadad, his king. The king was very anxious to have Naaman cured; and

he offered to write a letter to the king of Israel. I suppose he thought that was proper, as Elisha was a subject of the king of Israel. Benhadad knew but little about the prophets of the true God; and perhaps he supposed that Elisha would perform miracles at the command of his king.

The king of Syria wrote the letter, and Naaman left Damascus in his chariot, to go to Samaria. Naaman was attended by his servants, and carried with him a great quantity of silver and gold, to reward the prophet, in case he should cure him. When Naaman arrived at Samaria, he went to the palace of king Jeho-

ram, and gave him the letter of Benhadad. Here is a copy of the letter :

LETTER FROM BENHADAD TO JEHORAM.

“Now, when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman, my servant, to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.”

The king of Israel did not know what the king of Syria could mean by writing him such a letter. He rent his clothes, as people were accustomed to do when they were in distress, or astonishment, and said, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send

unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore, consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.”

Elisha seems, at this time, to have lived in Samaria. He heard of the great Syrian general who had come to king Jehoram to be cured of his leprosy, and that the king was much disturbed by the request; for the news of what was done at the palace was quickly circulated throughout the city. Elisha sent a messenger to the king, saying, “Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.” So Naaman went with his horses and with his chariot, and

stood at the door of the house of Elisha.—[*See frontispiece.*]

Elisha did not go out to see Naaman, though he was such a great man, and had come in such pomp to visit him. Instead of going out himself, he sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean!”

Naaman thought the prophet did not treat him with sufficient respect. He was very angry, and said, “Behold, I thought he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of

Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?" So he turned, and went away in a rage.

Naaman was proud. He thought Elisha should have used a great deal of form and ceremony, in curing a man of so much consequence as himself. He did not like so simple a remedy as washing in Jordan. If Naaman had continued in this state of mind, and had returned home without following the directions of Elisha, he would probably have been a leper as long as he lived. But his servants were much wiser than himself. They came near, and said to him, in a respectful manner, "My father, if

the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he said to thee, Wash, and be clean?" They knew that their master would have been willing to take the most disagreeable medicines, or submit to the most painful operation, or to pay any sum of money, however large, if he might be cured of his disorder. How much easier was it to wash in the river Jordan!

Naaman was convinced, by the reasoning of his servants, that he had acted foolishly. He went and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan; and his flesh, which was before diseased and decayed, became sound and healthful, like the flesh of a

little child. He felt the blood flow more freely in his veins, and life and vigour returned to his limbs. He was entirely cured of his leprosy.

Naaman was a worshipper of idols. He had not studied the Bible. He was ignorant of the true God, who made him and kept him alive. But in several things he acted more wisely than some do who have more knowledge of what is right.

First; he was willing to take advice. Naaman was the greatest man, except one, in the kingdom of Syria. He lived in a palace, in the midst of wealth and splendour. He was often consulted by the king. He was treated with much respect by officers, and soldiers, and states-

men, and by all the people of Syria. The Hebrew maid was apparently a person of very little importance. She was only a child, a captive, and a servant. But when she told of the wonderful things that had been done by Elisha, and said, that if her master would go to him, he might be cured of his leprosy, Naaman believed her. He followed her advice, because it appeared to be reasonable, though it was given by a child.

And when Naaman was angry with Elisha, for commanding him to wash in Jordan, and was going away in great wrath, he stopped to listen to the affectionate advice of his servants. When he saw that

they were right, and he was wrong, he was not ashamed to own that he was convinced by his inferiors. He went and did as they had advised him to do.

Second: Naaman conquered one feeling in himself which was very natural and very strong; but it was not wise. It was a prejudice in favour of his own country.

We all love our own country. This is right. We prefer it to any other place in the whole world. This is right too. But if we think there is nothing good or desirable any where else, we are prejudiced; because God has not confined his blessings to one land, but has scattered them in every part of the

world. Naaman had this prejudice. Syria was then a powerful kingdom, and Damascus a grand and delightful city. He thought the rivers Abana and Pharpar much finer streams than any in the land of Israel. He was not willing to believe that any healing qualities could be imparted to the river Jordan. But he conquered this prejudice, and it was well that he did; for if he had yielded to it, his leprosy would have lasted through life.

Third: Naaman obeyed the command God had given by his prophet, though the reason of the command was not explained to him. He did not understand why he was to wash

in Jordan. The most powerful medicines would not cure his disease, and he knew that all the water in the world would not, of itself, do him any good. Why, then, should he do so simple a thing as to bathe in the river Jordan? The only reason he knew was, that the prophet of God had commanded it, and would not cure him without; and that was a sufficient reason.

We must obey God, even though we do not understand the reason of his commands. God has told us in the Bible to do some things; and has promised, that if we do them, we shall be blessed. Now, we may not see any connexion between our doing these things and the blessing

promised. But that is no matter. God sees the connexion, and he will not bestow the blessing unless we use the means to obtain it, which he has appointed. God knows all things, and he has wise reasons for all that he does, though we may not understand them. It is our duty faithfully to obey his commands.

Naaman was full of joy and gratitude to God, when he found that he was restored to health. He returned with all his company to the house of Elisha, and stood before him, and said, "Behold, now, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel." Naaman wished to make the prophet a present, out of

the gold and silver which he had brought. Elisha refused to accept it. Naaman urged him; but still he refused. He did not wish for any of Naaman's money. It would have done him very little good. The prophets chose to live and dress plainly, and to deny themselves, so that they did not need to be rich. Besides, Elisha knew that the miracle which healed Naaman was performed by God. Elisha would not have been able to promise that Naaman should be cured, by washing in Jordan, if God had not directed him to do so. It would have been improper for Elisha to receive payment for what he had not done, and had in himself no power to perform.

Elisha wished to show Naaman that he was disinterested in sending for him, and praying to God to cure him. He desired only to do good to Naaman. He did not wish to make money, or to gain any thing to himself, by doing such acts of kindness. This would honour God, by showing that those who sincerely worshipped and served him were not selfish, like other people.

Naaman then told Elisha that he was determined to worship no other God but the God of the Israelites, who could do such wonderful things. He therefore begged that he might take from the land of Israel as much earth as two mules could carry, to build an altar in Damascus, upon

which he could offer sacrifices unto the true God.

I do not know that earth from the land of Israel would be any better for an altar than any other earth. But, perhaps it may have been thought so in those days, because the country of Palestine was a holy land, or a land set apart for the people of God. The inhabitants were the only worshippers of the true God upon earth. God was present with them in a very peculiar manner. Except when they had wicked rulers, they were governed by the laws of God, not only as individuals, but as a nation.

But if the earth from Israel was not more sacred than any other, Naaman, who had been educated an

idolater, might naturally have indulged such a superstitious idea. I do not know whether Elisha granted his request, but I think it likely he did.

Naaman went on to say to Elisha, that he was accustomed to go with king Benhadad, his master, into the temple of Rimmon, the principal idol of the Syrians. It was his business to do so, because he was the chief officer of the king. He was determined not to go there any more to worship the idol. He asked Elisha if God would permit him to go there, in attendance upon his master. He said, that when the king leaned on his arm, and bowed before the idol, he could not help bowing also; but as he should not do it with his

heart, and only as an act of service to his king, he hoped God would pardon him. We are not told what answer Elisha gave to the question of Naaman. Perhaps he saw that God was teaching him by his Holy Spirit, and would lead him by degrees to understand and to do his will. We may suppose that Elisha was not displeased with Naaman's conversation; for he said to him at parting, "Go in peace."

Naaman and his attendants had turned from the door of Elisha. They were passing through the streets of Samaria, on their way homeward. Gehazi was standing in deep thought. Though the servant of Elisha, he was covetous and

ambitious. He had been present while Elisha and Naaman talked together. He thought his master was very foolish to refuse the present that Naaman had offered. He could not bear to have Naaman carry all those talents of silver, and those rich garments, back to Syria. He was planning how he might get some of them for himself. He said, "Behold, my master hath spared Naaman, this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought; but, as the Lord liveth, I will run after him and take somewhat of him." "As the Lord *liveth!*" This was a solemn oath, which ought not to have been taken except on some very serious and important

occasion. Gehazi then followed as quickly as he could after Naaman. Naaman turned his head, and saw him running, and recollected that he had seen him at the house of the prophet. He immediately alighted from his chariot, to meet Gehazi, and said to him, "Is all well?" Gehazi answered, "All is well." My master hath sent me, saying, "Behold, even now there be come to me from Mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments." And Naaman said, "Be content; take two talents." And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver, in two bags, with two changes of

garments, and laid them upon two of his servants, and they bare them before him.

When they came to a secret place in the house, Gehazi took the silver and the garments and hid them. Afterward, he dismissed the servants of Naaman, and returned to his master. Elisha asked him, "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" Gehazi replied, that he had not been absent from home. But Elisha knew better. God had given to him the power of knowing what Gehazi had done, and of hearing what he told Naaman. He said, "Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a

time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?" Perhaps Gehazi had expected to buy a farm with the money that he had obtained from Naaman. Elisha said to Gehazi, "The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave to thee and to thy children for ever." The white scab of the leprosy instantly came over Gehazi. He went out from the presence of his master, a leper as white as snow.

This was a terrible punishment; but Gehazi deserved it. He had indulged covetous desires. He had taken advantage of Naaman's gratitude to Elisha, to rob him of part of

his property. He had told Naaman a wicked lie, in order to obtain what he wished. He had made his master appear mean and selfish, when he was really generous and disinterested. He had done what he could to hinder Naaman from becoming a worshipper of the true God, by making him think that the prophets of God were no better than other men. He had told another lie to his master, to conceal his fault.

All this was a great deal worse than it would have been, if Gehazi had been a heathen, and had not known much better. But he was an Israelite, and knew the law of God. He had probably been educated in one of the schools of the

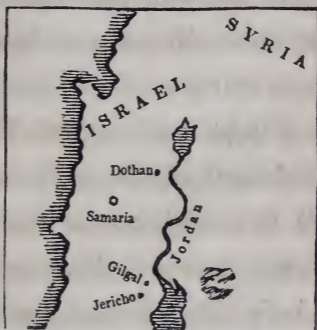
prophets, where that law was taught and explained. He had long been the chosen servant of Elisha, the greatest prophet then living. He pretended to be a good man, and ought to have been preparing himself to be a teacher of the people, who were then in great need of instruction. All this greatly increased his guilt.

CHAPTER VII.

ELISHA MAKES IRON TO SWIM.

Elisha goes with his scholars to the Jordan—Fords of the Jordan—Young men cut down trees for a college—An axe falls into the river—Elisha makes iron to swim—Benhadad invades Israel—Elisha defeats his purpose—Benhadad sends soldiers to take Elisha—Elisha's servant alarmed—Chariots and horses of fire surround Dathan—The Syrians made blind—Elisha leads them to Samaria—Description of Samaria—The Syrians sent home.

SOME time after Elisha had cured Naaman the Syrian, he was at one of the schools of the pro-



phets, near the river Jordan. Probably it was either at Gilgal or Jericho. The college in which they lived was not large enough to accommodate all the students; and some of them came to Elisha, and asked permission to go to the Jordan and cut down trees, and build a larger house near the banks of the river, where they might live more comfortably. Elisha consented; but they were not willing to go without him, because they loved his society and instructions.

Elisha, who was the head, or principal of the college, went with all his students to the river to cut down trees. Perhaps the place where they went was the fords

of Jordan, near Gilgal. This is a bend in the river, where it flows between high banks that are beautifully wooded. The water is so shallow that persons cross the river on horseback. The scene is very still, and green, and lovely; and if you look toward the north-east, you will see rocky mountains, that seem to shut in the river like a wall. It is very likely that these mountains were hewn into terraces, or stairs, and covered with verdure, in the time of Elisha.

As one of the young men was cutting down a tree that grew near the edge of the water, his axe fell into the river. He was much distressed, and said to Elisha, "Alas,



master! for it was borrowed." It is plain that the prophets were poor; for this young man borrowed the axe which he used, and was probably unable to pay for it when it was lost. The man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And the young man showed him the place. Elisha cut a stick, and cast it into the river, in the very spot where

the axe had fallen. Immediately the axe rose to the surface of the water, and floated upon it. Elisha said, "Take it up." And the young prophet put out his hand and took it. He could now go on very cheerfully with his work; and I doubt not a very comfortable building for the young men was soon raised, near the banks of the river Jordan.

One would hardly suppose that the king of Syria would wish to fight with the Israelites, now that Elisha had cured his favourite general of the leprosy. But, in about a year afterward, he again made war against Israel. It is not supposed that Naaman was engaged in this

war. Perhaps he resigned his office, and Hazael was made general about this time. Benhadad wished to enter the kingdom of Israel, in some quarter where there were no armed men to meet him ; that he might march into the country, and subdue the inhabitants, and reach some of the principal cities, before the army of the Israelites could be brought against him.

He called a council of his officers, and consulted with them where he had better pitch his camp. They chose some place where they thought the land of Israel would be most unprotected ; and they were not to inform anybody what place they had chosen. They immediately led on

their army to that place. But they found it defended by the army of Israel. Benhadad was obliged to retreat. He was disappointed. He again called a council of his officers. They selected some other part of the country, which they thought would not be defended. They marched thither, but found the Israelites prepared to meet them.

I suppose this happened several times. The reason was this:—God told Elisha against what part of Israel Benhadad's army was about to march, and Elisha sent a messenger to inform king Jehoram. Then Jehoram could lay his plans so as to defeat the plans of the king of Syria.

At last, Benhadad began to think that there must be a traitor among his officers, who informed the king of Israel of his secret designs. He called together his officers, and said to them, "Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?" One of the officers said, "None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber." Benhadad was very angry when he found that Elisha had given him all this trouble. He determined to send a part of his army to take the prophet, and make him a prisoner, and bring him away from his country to the Syrian camp. It was

foolish for Benhadad to expect to be able to do this. He ought to have remembered that God, who had helped Elisha to perform so many miracles, and had told him of things that were passing at such a great distance, could protect him against never so many armed men.

Benhadad sent a spy into Israel; that is, he caused one of his servants to disguise himself so as not to be known as a Syrian, and commanded him to go and see where Elisha was. The man came back, and said he was at Dothan. This was a city about twelve miles north of Samaria. It was in some one of the fields around Dothan that Joseph was sold by his brothers to a com-

pany of Ishmaelites, who carried him into Egypt. This happened, you know, about one thousand years before the time of Elisha.

Benhadad sent a great company of horses and chariots and armed men to take Elisha. They went by night, as silently as they could, that they might not be seen by the Israelites. When they came to Dothan, they surrounded the city to prevent Elisha from escaping, and waited for the morning.

Morning came. The servant of Elisha rose early, and went out of the house. He saw a great host of horses, and chariots, and armed men surrounding the city. He was much alarmed. He called his master, and

said to him, "Alas, my master! what shall we do?" Elisha had confidence in God. He knew that God had sent his angels to protect him. He said to his servant, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see." The Lord opened the eyes of the young man, the servant of Elisha, so that he might see those things which were hidden from common persons. He looked, and all around the prophet, and over the whole hill on which the city stood, were horses and chariots of fire, blazing with intense brightness.

The Syrians now discovered where

Elisha was, and entered the city to take him. Probably they came in at different gates, so as to meet near the house of Elisha, and surround it. They would also place guards at the gates to prevent his escape. But all this trouble was of no use. They were not fighting against Elisha alone, but against the God of Israel; and he had many ways of preventing them from doing what they wished.

Elisha prayed to the Lord to send blindness upon the Syrians. God heard his prayer, and the Syrians became blind, and knew not what to do or where to go.

Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, neither is this the city:

follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek." He led them on, and they groped their way after him.

When they had gone about twelve miles, Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see." The Lord opened their eyes, and they looked around them. And what did they see? They were in the midst of a large and populous city, full of fine and stately buildings. There was a magnificent palace, adorned with ivory; here was a temple, which had once been dedicated to the worship of Baal, the god of the Tyrians. There were no old and decayed houses, but every thing

was new; for the city had been lately built. The walls and towers were strong, and well defended by soldiers. The city stood on a long mount, of an oval figure. All around it was a beautiful green valley, bounded by a circle of hills, with gentle slopes, planted to the top with grain and olive and fig trees. The mountain on which the city stood was well watered, and the gardens were pleasant. The inhabitants were engaged in various kinds of business; except such as had assembled on the house-tops and in the streets, to look upon the Syrian army.

Who is that king, surrounded by soldiers? It is Jehoram, and that

is his palace, and those are the city guards. This is Samaria, the capital city of the kingdom of Israel.

The Syrians must have been alarmed and bewildered, when they saw that they were in Samaria, and in the power of the king of Israel. But Jehoram, though he wished to destroy them, dared not do it without the permission of Elisha. He said to the prophet, "My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?" But Elisha would not suffer it. He said, "Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive, with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink,

and go to their master." The Syrians then returned home. They gave up, for the present, their plan of attacking the Israelites.

CHAPTER VIII.

ELISHA FORETELLS PLENTY IN SAMARIA.

The Syrians besiege Samaria—Severe famine—A woman eats her own son—Jehoram is angry with Elisha—He sends men to kill the prophet—Elisha foretells abundance in Samaria—The four lepers without the city—They visit the Syrian camp—The Syrians are alarmed, and flee—The lepers return to the city—The Israelites gather the spoils, and food becomes plenty—Jehoram a wicked king—Another famine—Elisha tells the Shunamite to leave the country—She goes to Philistia—She returns, and asks the king for her land.

SOME time afterward a great army of the Syrians came into Israel, and besieged Samaria. This army was commanded by Benhadad. He surrounded the city of Samaria with his soldiers, so that no provisions

could be brought into it from the country. He continued the siege a long time, expecting that all the food in the city would be exhausted, and that the inhabitants would then be obliged to open their gates, and submit to him as their conqueror.

The famine in Samaria became very severe and distressing. Large sums of money were paid for small quantities of the meanest food.

One day, as the king of Israel was walking upon the top of the wall, where the soldiers were placed who defended the city, a woman cried unto him for help. She had been so famished with hunger that she had given her own son for food for herself and another woman. Thus it

happened, as Moses had told them, hundreds of years before, it would happen, if they did not keep God's commandments: and the very words of Moses are found in Deuteronomy, chap. xxviii. ver. 55 to 58, inclusive. The king was so shocked, and so filled with despair, when he heard the story of the woman, that he rent his clothes, as people in that country were accustomed to do when they were in great distress. Those who passed by him upon the wall, looked, and saw that he had sackcloth under his garments. This was a coarse rough cloth, made of hair, which the Jews and Israelites used to wear when they sorrowed for their sins, or were suffering some great calamity.

But though Jehoram wore the garment of penitence, he was not truly sorry for his sins and the sins of the people, which had brought upon them the displeasure of God. Instead of this, he was angry at Elisha, as if that good prophet had been the cause of all their suffering. Jehoram said, in a great rage, "God do so, and more also to me, if the head of Elisha, the son of Shaphat, shall stand on him this day."

Jehoram knew that Elisha had not brought the Syrians against him, and reduced the city by famine; but he was like other wicked men, when they are afflicted, full of rage and madness, and determined to revenge himself upon somebody.

How different from this furious king was the appearance of Elisha! Though he had suffered with the rest of the people, from the want of food, he sat calmly in his house, with the elders of Samaria around him, waiting patiently for deliverance to come from God. While he sat there, he knew that Jehoram had sent a messenger to take off his head; and he said to the elders, "See ye, how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? Look when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?"

Elisha called Jehoram the son of a murderer, because his father, Ahab,

had permitted the prophets of God and Naboth to be slain by Jezebel. Elisha knew that Jehoram would soon follow his messenger, and he ordered the door to be closed till the king should arrive.

The king soon came, and entered with his attendants into the house of Elisha. He immediately showed his impatience, and want of trust in God, by exclaiming, "Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Elisha then delivered to the king a message which he had received from God. He said, "Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow, about this time, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a she-

kel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." A lord on whose hand the king leaned disbelieved this promise of God. He said, scornfully, that he should not expect provisions to be abundant in Samaria on the morrow, unless the Lord should make windows in heaven, and rain them down. It was very impious in this man to disbelieve what God had said; and he was soon punished. Elisha said to him, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."

The sun was low in the western sky. It shone upon the helmets, and shields, and burnished armour of the Syrians who surrounded the

city. It shone also upon the sentinels who marched backward and forward on the walls, and upon the inhabitants of the city, as they passed, with pale and melancholy countenances, silently and fearfully along the streets.

Now the sun has set behind the mountains of Samaria, and the shadows of twilight have gathered over the city. Four leprous men are sitting at one of the gates, and talking together. They had come under the walls to be protected from the Syrians. Besides being afflicted with a distressing disease, they were almost dying with hunger. What could they do? They said one to another, "Why sit we here until

we die? If we say we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now, therefore, come, and let us fall unto the hosts of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." And they rose up in the twilight, to go to the camp of the Syrians. They went from one end of the camp to the other, but found the tents all deserted. Not one of the Syrians was to be seen. What had become of them? The tents of the officers and soldiers remained, just as they were when they had been occupied by their owners. They were filled with provisions, and rich fur-

niture and garments, and the horses and asses of the army were tied near the camp. Every thing showed that the Syrians had just fled, and had gone in great haste and confusion.

Now the reason of their sudden departure was this: God had determined to protect the Samaritans against the Syrians. He had caused the Syrians, just before the lepers arrived at their camp, when the darkness was coming on, and they could not see distinctly, to hear a great noise of chariots, and a noise of horses; a noise like a great host coming against them. They said, "Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to

come upon us." Wherefore, they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses; even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

The lepers went into one tent, where they found food ready prepared. They ate and drank what they wanted, and carried away gold, and silver, and raiment, and hid it. They then went into another tent, and did the same; till they had secured for themselves as much property as they wished. Then they recollected that they were doing wrong, in not telling the good news to the people in the city.

It was night; the stars shone in the heavens, and the inhabitants

had gone to rest, when the lepers again reached the city. They called to the porter of the gate of Samaria, and told him that the Syrians had deserted their camp. The porter of the gate went instantly and told the porters of the king's palace, and the king was informed of the good news. He arose from his bed; but he did not believe that the Syrians had gone quite away. He suspected that they had hid themselves at a little distance from the camp, to deceive the Israelites, and draw them out from the city. He thought that when the gates were open, and the people were confusedly hastening to the camp, the Syrians would return. They might then easily

destroy, or make prisoners of the Israelites, who would not be on their guard.

It was not strange that king Jehoram should suspect that this was the design of the Syrians; for such deceptions are often used in war. But if Jehoram had paid proper attention to what Elisha had said, the day before, he would have thought that God might have interfered to send away the Syrians; since he had promised, in some way, to deliver the Israelites.

One of the king's servants advised that a few horsemen should be sent out to discover where the Syrians were. The king sent two men on horses, and they followed in the track

of the Syrian army as far as the Jordan. They easily found the path which the Syrians had taken; for the way was full of garments and vessels, which they had cast from them in their haste.

The messengers returned, and told the king that the Syrians had certainly gone homeward. Then the people went out, and took what they wanted from the tents of the Syrians; and so great was the abundance of provisions that a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.

The king appointed the lord on whose arm he was accustomed to lean, to have the charge of the city

gate; perhaps to regulate the provision market that was held there. The people, in their hunger and impatience to go out and come in, threw him down and trod upon him till he died. This was the punishment of his unbelief, and the fulfilment of the threatening of God by Elisha, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." It is a great sin to disbelieve the promises of God.

Though Jehoram was not quite so bad as his father Ahab, he was still a very wicked king. He at first put away the image of Baal, but he afterwards permitted it to be restored and worshipped. I suppose this was owing to the influence of

his mother Jezebel, who lived at his court. It shows that it is a sad thing to have a wicked mother. Many of the Israelites had become idolaters in the days of Ahab, and others might be tempted, by the example of the king, and Jezebel, and the great men about the palace, to join in worshipping the idol.

God told Elisha that he should punish them by sending a famine upon Israel. Elisha went to the woman of Shunem, whose son he had restored to life, and advised her to go, with her family, and live in some other country; because God would send a famine upon the land of Israel, which would last seven years.

This woman was not like Jehoram and his attendants, who disbelieved the word of God. No; she instantly arose, and went, with her family, to Philistia, on the borders of the Mediterranean. There she remained till the famine was over.

But when, at the end of seven years, she returned, she found that some person had taken possession of her house and land, and refused to give it up to her. She went, with her son, to complain to the king.

It happened that, just about this time, king Jehoram felt a great curiosity to hear of the miracles that had been done by Elisha. But Je-

horam did not wish to see the prophet himself, lest he should reprove him for his faults. So Jehoram sent for Gehazi, though he was a leper. It was not unlawful to speak to a man who had the leprosy; and Gehazi could stand at such a distance as not to communicate the disease.

Gehazi began to give an account of all the miracles of Elisha; and just as he was telling how Elisha had raised the Shunemite's son to life, the woman herself came in, and her son was with her. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life." The king asked her what she wanted; and she told him that her land was unjustly

kept from her. Jehoram said to an officer, "Restore all that was her's, and all the fruits of the field, since the day that she left the land even until now."

CHAPTER IX.

ELISHA GOES TO DAMASCUS.

Elisha prepares for a journey—Description of Gilead and Bashan—Damascus—Description of Damascus—Benhadad sends Hazael to Elisha—Elisha's address to Hazael—Hazael kills Benhadad, and becomes king.



THE prophet Elisha has put on his sandals, fastened his robe a-

round him with a girdle, and taken

his staff in his hand. He is going a long journey, from Samaria to Damascus, the capital of Syria. He does not take this journey on his own account. The prophets of God do not live, or labour, or travel for themselves. He goes at the command of God. We may trace his way as he passes over the plain of Esdrae-lon, and crossing the Jordan not far from the lake of Gennesareth, enters the highlands of Gilead and Bashan.

This country was full of every variety of beautiful scenery. The air was cooled by fresh breezes from the high mountains, and streams rushed down their sides to water and enrich the plains. In the recesses of the mountains were deep

valleys, and green meadows, and gently flowing rivulets. Upon the beautifully rounded hills the flocks and fat cattle of Bashan fed in the pastures, or rested under the spreading oaks. Groves of the finest trees were scattered about the plains, and upon the slopes of the hill. The cities and villages of the children of Manasseh appeared here and there in the landscape, rising above the gardens, and wheat-fields, and olive-grounds around them. Farther to the north-east was the fruitful plain of Hauran; and presently the traveller found himself among the mountains that surround the city of Damascus. This city lies in a fruitful plain, at the foot of moun-

tains which belong to the eastern range of Lebanon. It is encircled on three sides by hills in the form of a triumphal arch. As Elisha was passing around one of these hills he came in sight of Damascus. The walls and towers of the city rose out of a forest of gardens and trees, which was twelve miles in circumference.

A river of cold pure water, which rises in Lebanon, flows through the plain. It is now called Barrady; but it is probably the same river that was named Abana, in the days of Elisha. At the foot of some rocky hills, about five miles to the north-west of the city, the river is divided into several streams. These

streams pass around the city, and water the gardens, and one of them runs directly through the city. The plain of Damascus is called the paradise of the earth. It is full of palms and cypresses, ornamented gardens, and delightful meadows. A great variety of fruits, such as oranges, citrons, and apricots, grow in the gardens. The winding paths that lead in every direction from the city, through groves, and orchards, and by the side of fountains and brooks, afford delightful walks to the inhabitants. Many summer-houses open into the gardens, where persons who are weary, or overcome by the heat, can rest and refresh themselves. The several streams

that water the plain meet and again unite below the city, forming a large waterfall. It is pleasant to sit there beneath the trees at noon, and listen to the sound of the cataract, and watch its dashing spray.

The street which is called Straight extends from the eastern to the western gate of Damascus. It is broad and well paved.

Benhadad, king of Syria, was then ill at Damascus. Some person informed him that Elisha was approaching the city. He immediately told Hazael, his chief officer, to take a present, and go and meet the prophet of God, and inquire of the Lord, by him, whether Benhadad would recover of his disease. So

Hazael loaded forty camels with every good thing that was to be found in Damascus, and went out to meet Elisha, and said to him, "Thy son Benhadad, king of Syria, hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?"

Elisha answered, that Benhadad would certainly die, but his death would not be caused by his disease.

Elisha then looked earnestly and steadfastly into the face of Hazael; and, as he looked, he wept.

Hazael was confused. He said, "Why weepeth my lord?"

Elisha answered, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their

young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children to the ground.”

Hazael was surprised that Elisha should think so ill of him. He had formed no such designs; and he did not know the wickedness of his own heart.

He said, “What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?”

And Elisha replied, “The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria.”

Hazael would be a king. Then he would have much power and influence, would be often tempted to do wrong, and would have nothing to restrain him: he would then find

himself capable of doing such deeds of cruelty, as he was now shocked to hear mentioned. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

The prediction of Elisha had already excited evil thoughts in the mind of Hazael. He determined to murder Benhadad, and obtain the kingdom for himself, immediately, instead of waiting patiently till God should give it to him. He left Elisha, and returned to his master, who said to him, "What said Elisha to thee?" Hazael answered, "He told me that thou shouldest surely recover." This falsehood was probably designed to make Benhadad

easy, and to put him off his guard. The next day Hazael took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and spread it on the king's face. This, caused the immediate death of Benhadad. Hazael then began to reign over Syria.

CHAPTER X.

ELISHA SENDS A PROPHET TO ANOINT
JEHU.

Elisha sends a prophet to anoint Jehu—Jehu proclaimed king—Jezebel killed, and devoured by dogs—Jehu destroys the temple and priests of Baal—His son reigns in his stead.

It will be recollected by those who have read the story of Elijah, that he was sent by God to pronounce a curse upon king Ahab, after the murder of Naboth by Jezebel. Elijah then told Ahab that God had determined to punish him for all his sins, by destroying his family, and giving the kingdom of

Israel to a person who was not related to him.

The time had now come for this threatening to be fulfilled. Elisha called a young prophet, and told him to take a box of oil, and go to Ramoth-gilead, and anoint Jehu, one of the captains of the army, to be king, instead of Jehoram, the son of Ahab, who now reigned. The young man, who was sent on this errand, is supposed by some to have been the prophet Jonah.

When the prophet arrived at Ramoth-gilead, he found Jehu sitting with the rest of the captains of the army.

The prophet said, "I have an errand to thee, O captain." And

Jehu said, "Unto which of all of us?"
And he said, "To thee, O captain."

Then Jehu went with the prophet into the house, and the prophet poured the oil on his head, and said, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab, thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish. And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, the son of Ahijah. And

the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her.”

The young man opened the door and fled. He had been employed upon a dangerous errand. If any of the friends of king Jehoram had discovered what he was doing, they would instantly have taken his life.

When Jehu returned to the captains, they inquired what had been done; and he told them. They instantly united in proclaiming him king. They spread their garments for him to walk upon; which was a common way of showing honour to a person in those days. They blew the trumpets, saying, “Jehu is king.” This support of the captains

secured to Jehu the services of the army, which would make it easy to dethrone Jehoram.

Jehu immediately rode in his chariot, at the head of the army, towards Jezreel, where Jehoram was. Jehoram saw him coming, and thinking he had just returned from fighting against the Syrians, went out to meet him. Ahaziah, king of Judah, who was visiting his uncle Jehoram, accompanied him.

And Jehu drew a bow, and sent an arrow which pierced the heart of Jehoram; and he died. They threw his body into the field of Naboth, whom his mother, Jezebel, had murdered. Ahaziah, the king of Judah, attempted to flee; but he

was slain, by the command of Jehu, before he could make his escape.

But the most guilty person in Ahab's family was yet to be punished. Queen Jezebel was in the palace at Jezreel, when she heard of the death of her son, and the approach of Jehu at the head of his army. She knew her danger; but she was too proud to submit to the conqueror. She painted her eyelids, to make her eyes look large and bright, put on a richly ornamented head-dress, and looked out of the window.

As Jehu entered the palace gate, she called to him, and reproached him for killing the king, his master. Jehu ordered some ser-

vants, whom he saw at the windows, to throw her down. They threw her upon the pavement, and she was trodden under foot by the horses. Shortly after, Jehu commanded some persons to go and bury her. They went, but found she had been devoured by dogs. Thus the prophecy of Elijah was fulfilled, when he said, "In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel."

Seventy of the descendants of Ahab lived in Samaria. Jehu caused them all to be slain. He slew also some of the princes of Judah, who belonged to the family of Ahab, and had come to visit their relatives, the young princes of Israel: He de-

stroyed the image and temple of Baal, and put all the priests of Baal to death. But Jehu continued to worship the golden calves, and was not careful to obey the law of God. He reigned twenty-eight years in Samaria.

Jehoahaz, his son, was the next king. He sinned against God, and tempted the Israelites to sin. To punish them, God delivered them into the hands of Hazael, king of Syria, who treated them with much cruelty, as Elisha had before told Hazael he would do, when they met each other at Damascus. Jehoahaz died when he had reigned seventeen years; and his son, Joash, began to reign in his stead.

CHAPTER XI.

ELISHA'S DEATH.

Nothing said of Elisha for forty-five years—What he was probably doing during this time—Elisha falls sick—King Joash visits him—Why he came to see him—Meaning of symbol—Elisha tells the king to take bow and arrows—He foretells victories over the Syrians—Elisha dies—Account of the death of good men in the Bible—Short examples—Of more consequence how we live than how we die—Reflections—A dead man restored to life by the bones of Elisha—God watches over the dust of his people.

DURING forty-five years, nothing is said of Elisha in the Bible. He was undoubtedly engaged in his usual employment of superintending the schools of the prophets, and teaching the people. As he earn-

estly desired the prosperity of his countrymen, he must have been distressed at the tyranny and oppression of Hazael. But he knew that the people deserved it, and that God was just in punishing them. I have no doubt he often wept for their miseries, and prayed to God that their afflictions might do them good, and make them cease to worship idols. He would continually warn them to repent of sin, and remember the God of their fathers. And when God sent the Israelites relief from the Syrians, Elisha would bless him for his goodness and mercy.

Hazael would not be likely to let his army hurt Elisha, who had foretold that he should be king over

Syria; and Jehoahaz seems to have been too much occupied in defending his kingdom, to disturb the prophet. Elisha could, therefore, go on quietly teaching his pupils, and preparing for a better world, where there are no wars, nor sins, to disturb the happy inhabitants.

When Jehoahaz died, Elisha may have hoped that Joash would not be so wicked as his father; but, if he did, he was disappointed; for Joash was a bad man. The aged prophet could, therefore, find little to comfort him in the condition or prospects of the Israelites. This, I doubt not, would lead him to look to heaven, where he hoped soon to rest from his labours and sorrows.

At last, Elisha became sick, and was about to die. As soon as king Joash heard of it, he was much alarmed, and went to see him. I do not think that Joash was in the habit of visiting the prophet, or of sending for him to come to the palace. Bad men do not wish to be with those that fear God. They hate their company, and are very uneasy when such persons are present.

But Joash knew that Elisha was a distinguished prophet of the living God, and that his death would be a great loss to the Israelites. So he came down to see Elisha, and wept over him and said, "O, my father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."

I think Joash would not have gone to the dying bed of a good man, if he had not feared that great evils would come upon himself and his kingdom, in consequence of Elisha's death.

He might have been taught by the scene how calmly a friend of the true God can die: but he did not wish to be instructed how to become pious and fitted for heaven. He wept, not because a prophet of the Lord was about to be taken away from his kingdom, and he could no longer enjoy the benefit of the example, and prayers, and influence of Elisha. Oh, no! I do not suppose that Joash thought much of this. He only thought that

when Elisha was gone, the Syrians might do him a great deal of harm. He desired that the prophet should live; for he knew that Elisha could do more to protect his country than horses and chariots of war.

But Joash may have been sorry, when he heard that Elisha was sick, that he had so much neglected him. Wicked men often ridicule and slight their pious friends and neighbours; but, when they see them about to die, they begin to be troubled, and sometimes confess they have done wrong. They will praise a good man after he is dead: but, if he should come back from the grave, and live among them again, they would treat him just as they did

before. The reason is, that they are not truly sorry for the injury they have done. Their consciences tell them they have done wrong; but their hearts do not really repent of it.

Elisha wished to inform Joash of something that would happen in future. Instead of telling him in words, he expressed it by a symbol, which he afterwards explained. A symbol is where one object or action is made to represent another.

Elisha said unto the king, "Take bow and arrows." And he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, "Put thine hand upon the bow." And he put

his hand upon it. And Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. And he said, "Open the window eastward." And he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot." And he shot.



And he said, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them." And

he said, "Take the arrows." And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, "Smite upon the ground." And he smote thrice, and stopped. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."

After this visit from the king, Elisha died, and they buried him. We do not know the circumstances of his death, or how they celebrated his funeral. I believe that he died calm and peaceful, amidst the lamentations of the sons of the prophets and the friends of the God of

Israel. They followed him to the grave, with deep grief for his death and for their own loss. They placed his body in the tomb, and went to their homes filled with sadness. But the spirit of Elisha was now among the just in heaven. He was a companion of angels before the throne of God. There he mingled with the saints of whom he had often read in the Bible, and of whom he had often thought, when here on the earth. There he once more met with his old master and friend Elijah, whom he had seen ascending in the chariot of fire.

How short and simple, but affecting, is the account of the death of good men in the Bible! All that is

said of the death of Abraham is, "Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died, in a good old age; an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people."

It speaks thus of the death of Isaac: "And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him." Of the death of Moses, it is only said, "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there, in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley, in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." And, of Elisha's death, the

only account we have is, "Elisha died, and they buried him." In a similar manner, the Bible mentions the death of many other celebrated saints. Of some, it does not even tell either the time, or the place of their death. In this number are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and many other prophets; and Peter, Paul, John, and others, of the apostles.

And what lessons are we to learn from this? That it is more important how we live, than how we die. If we live as the righteous do, we shall die their death. But, however we die, if we live a useless, ungodly life, we shall be wretched for ever beyond the grave. And, however we die, if we have here devoted our days

to the service of God, he will watch over our dust, as it sleeps in the tomb. He will raise it, an incorruptible body, on the morning of the resurrection, and we shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever.

Who that reads this book would not wish to be happy after death? Who would be shut out of heaven, and live always with drunkards, and liars, and murderers, and idolaters, far away from the mansions of peace and blessedness? Remember—

“Those holy gates for ever bar
Pollution, sin, and shame;
None shall obtain admittance there
But followers of the Lamb.”

If you would be the companion of saints and angels in another world, you must be the companion of good men in this. If you would worship God and the Lamb, in heaven, you must repent of sin, and trust in Christ, here, on the earth.

Some time after the death of Elisha, a company of mourners were bearing the dead body of a friend to the tomb. As they passed slowly along, with heavy hearts, and with wailing and melancholy music, they spied, at some distance, a band of armed men advancing to meet them. This was the season of the year in which kings led out their armies to war. The mourners were frightened; for they knew that the band

of men approaching were Moabites, who would either kill them, or take them prisoners and carry them into another land. So they cast the body hastily into the tomb of Elisha, which was near by, and were turning to flee away. But no sooner had the body of the dead man touched the bones of Elisha, than it was restored to life. The man began to breathe. He rose up, and came forth from the tomb, and perhaps hastened away from the Moabites, in company with his astonished friends.

How precious in the eyes of the Lord is even the very dust of his people! Elisha had lain in the grave until the flesh had fallen from his bones, and his friends had pro-



The dead restored to life by touching the bones of Elisha.

The first part of the book is devoted to a general
 introduction to the subject of the history of
 the world. The author discusses the various
 theories of the origin of life and the
 development of the human race. He
 also touches upon the history of the
 world from the beginning of time to
 the present day. The second part of
 the book is devoted to a detailed
 account of the history of the
 world from the beginning of time
 to the present day. The author
 discusses the various theories of the
 origin of life and the development
 of the human race. He also
 touches upon the history of the
 world from the beginning of time
 to the present day.

It is clear that the author of this
 book has done a great deal of
 research into the history of the
 world. His book is a valuable
 contribution to the study of the
 history of the world.

bably ceased to mourn for him. But the Lord still watched over the grave of his faithful prophet. It was not any power that belonged to the bones of Elisha, which raised the dead man to life. No; it was the power of God. He meant to show the Israelites that Elisha was a good man, and that they ought to remember his counsels. And I do not suppose the Israelites were so foolish as to take the bones of Elisha, and carry them about, for the sake of healing the sick, as some people for this purpose now carry about the bones of those whom they call saints.

How sweet is the slumber of the righteous in the grave! They may

be forgotten by their neighbours; friends may at last cease to think of them, or think of them only now and then, when they go to the graveyard to bury other friends. But God never forgets his people, though they may have been dead many thousand years. And he will finally call their bodies from the tomb, and take them home to heaven. There they will never be sick, never die, and never become old and feeble.

CHAPTER XII.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA COMPARED.

Things in which Elijah and Elisha were alike—Things in which they were unlike—God suits the talents and qualities of his people to their duties—Elijah's departure from the world resembled his life—Elisha's death similar to his life.

As Elijah and Elisha prophesied in Israel at nearly the same time, and as Elisha was the pupil and successor of Elijah, it may be interesting to notice in what things they resembled each other, and in what things they were different from each other.

They were alike in love to God,

and in living humble, holy, and obedient lives. Both of them were men of much prayer; both were patriotic and disinterested. They loved their country: they thought little of their own sufferings, or even of their own lives, in comparison with the prosperity and happiness of the Israelites. They knew that their countrymen could not be prosperous and happy, without obeying and worshipping the God of their fathers. And both Elijah and Elisha were willing to be poor and self-denying, and to labour day and night to promote the worship of the true God among their brethren. They were both temperate in their habits, and moderate in their desires.

They sought not the favour of men, but the approbation of God and of their own consciences. They spent much time and strength in educating a number of young men, and preparing them to become prophets and ministers among the Israelites. They endeavoured, in this way, to supply the places of the priests and Levites, who had gone to Jerusalem to worship at the temple.

Elijah and Elisha were alike in some of the miracles which they wrought. Elijah multiplied the oil and meal of the widow of Zarephath, and raised her son from the dead. Elisha increased the oil of the prophet's widow, and restored

to life the son of the woman of Shunem.

But, in some other respects, Elijah and Elisha were quite unlike each other. Elijah was raised up by God to do good in a particular way. The king and princes and people of Israel had become so exceedingly wicked, that God could not any longer treat them with mildness and forbearance. A prophet was needed of great boldness and severity, who would denounce punishment against the king and his family, and destroy the priests of Baal, who tempted the people to sin.

Elijah was such a man. He was fearless and decided. A kind

of mystery is thrown around him. Nothing is told us of his parents, or of his early life and education, except that he was a native of Tishbe, in Gilead. The first we know of him, he was standing in a rough garment, and with a stern brow, before the king of Israel, and threatening him with a severe judgment from God. He is brought so suddenly before us; he shows so little fear of the king, or desire of his favour; so little sympathy with the feelings of ordinary men appears in his manner, that one might almost fancy him a messenger sent directly from God, and having no relation to this world. We look again, and he has vanished. God has con-

ducted him to a place of safety ; and no one can inform the king whither he has gone.

A long interval passes ; and he appears on Mount Carmel, to maintain the honour of the God of Israel against the king, and the people, and the idolatrous priests of Baal. He is alone ; but he is not afraid. He addresses the people with severe reproof and bitter irony ; he shows, by a miracle, that Jehovah is the true God : he takes the priests of Baal to the brook Kishon, and puts them to death. Then he withdraws to the desert.

Years pass away ; and he again appears, in the same unexpected manner, to Ahab, in the vineyard

of Naboth. There, with his usual stern severity, he reproveth the terrified king, pronounces sentence upon him as a criminal, and disappears. Next we see him solemnly calling down fire from heaven, to consume the messengers of king Ahaziah. Everywhere he appears the same courageous, firm, and serious prophet. He performs the work that God commands, and then retires, as though he had nothing more to do with men.

Elijah was a reformer. A reformer is not generally so social and domestic in his feelings as some other men. But he needs to be bold and decided, and zealous for the honour of God, and severe in re-

buking sinners. He should be a man of elevated mind and self-denying habits. He should have no false pity for such as break the law of God. He must learn not to fear death, and then he will not be afraid of the anger of kings. He must learn to do without the comforts and conveniences of life, and then he will not desire the favour of great men. Elijah had a kind and affectionate disposition, as is shown by his treatment of the widow of Zarephath; but his circumstances made it necessary for him, generally, not to indulge his feelings.

Elisha, on the contrary, was social and gentle in his temper. He was found dwelling among men, and

doing them acts of kindness: he healed the waters of Jericho, and went with the young prophets to the banks of the Jordan, to cheer them, by his conversation, during their labour. He often visited his friend, the woman of Shunem, and sympathized strongly with her affliction at the death of her son.

His miracles were usually those of kindness and mercy. Besides raising the Shunemite's son, he recovered the lost axe of the young prophet, and supplied the armies of Israel and Judah with water, in the desert of Moab. He many times delivered the Israelites from the Syrians; and once, when part of the Syrian army were struck with

blindness, and led into Samaria, he delivered them from the king of Israel. He healed the leprosy of Naaman, and removed whatever was poisonous from the food which he had caused to be prepared for the young prophets.

His messages to the kings of Israel were generally messages of mercy. He did not need so much boldness as Elijah had, to fit him to deliver these messages. And what God told him to say would not so much offend the great men of Israel, as what God had told Elijah to say. Elisha might, generally, live among them in peace, and yet do all the duties which God required of him as a prophet.

God suits the talents and the qualities of his servants to the duties which they have to perform. I do not know that Elijah loved God more than Elisha did, or that he was any more an enemy to idolatry, or any more zealous for the honour of God, than Elisha was. But I do not think that Elijah could have lived as quietly as Elisha seems to have done, in Samaria. I think his zeal would have led him to attack idolatry so boldly, that he would have excited the anger and hatred of his countrymen. God designed Elijah and Elisha for different employments in his service; so he gave them different tempers and talents.

Elisha might not have been so

fearless in exposing the crimes of Ahab as Elijah was; while Elijah might not have so well performed the more quiet duties which were performed by Elisha. The Israelites, though wicked and idolatrous in the days of Elisha, were not so bad as they were during the life of Elijah. The worship of Baal had been brought into Israel by Jezebel, from her own country; and, while Ahab lived, in consequence of her influence over him, it flourished and spread through the nation. But, when Jezebel had partly lost her influence at court, the worship of Baal was not so popular. After her death, it was forbidden. On this account, Elisha did not need so

much boldness as Elijah needed in the time of Ahab.

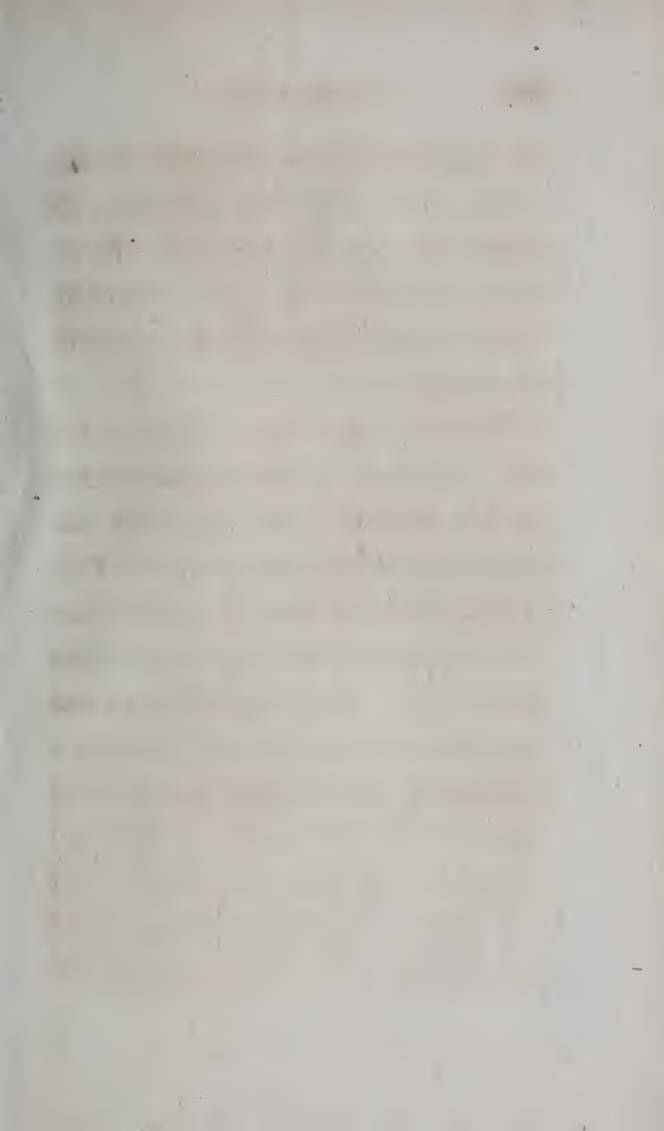
The pupils in the schools of the prophets respected both Elijah and Elisha. But I suppose that they regarded Elijah with the more reverence and awe, because there were such dignity and majesty in his character. They would consider Elisha as a very holy man, and a distinguished prophet; but I believe they would feel more at ease in his presence, than in the presence of Elijah.

The manner in which Elijah departed from this world was sublime and mysterious, like his character and appearance while on earth. He did not resemble other men in his

life, and he did not, like other men, die, but was taken up suddenly, in a flaming chariot, to heaven. Even after he left the world, the waters of Jordan were divided by Elisha with his mantle.

Elisha's death was similar to his life. He died at home, surrounded by his friends. He was still the gentle and affectionate prophet. One of his last acts was to foretell the deliverance of his countrymen from the Syrians. And even when he had long lain in the grave, God caused a miracle to be wrought by his dead body.

THE END.





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